

Underwater robots a highlight of 4-H camp

For four days, 15 Camden R-III students ranging from fifth to seventh grades learned about SeaPerch, an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle. The High School's FIRST LASER team along with Camden County 4-H hosted the camp which is in its second year.



Camdenton students try out their SeaPerch creations at Sleep Inn on Thursday, July 31.

Spree Hilliard

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Camdenton

Students built the vehicles literally from the ground up. The kit consists of low-cost, easily accessible parts. Teams of three students and one teacher focus on learning engineering concepts, problem solving, teamwork and technical applications.

The Navy SeaPerch Camp not only teaches the kids about the vehicle itself but broadens their idea of engineering job opportunities.

Mitch and Sherry Comer are in charge of the high school team and were eager to collaborate with 4H for this camp. "It involves more kids and gets them excited about STEM," Sherry Comer said. "It is a good way to gear them back up for school."

Some of the high school team members volunteered throughout the week. For Mitch Comer, that is what it is all about. "It is a part of our mission," he said. "It is just another great learning opportunity."

Maneuvering a vehicle underwater is very different than driving a robot on lands. With the ripples in the water and the distorted view the driver gets above the water, it makes it difficult. The fact that this camp focuses on marine technology was why Michele Kroll with MU Extension wanting to host the camp.

"With us living at the lake area, I thought it would bring a different type of robot," Kroll said. The vehicles can be used throughout the year for various purposes. Kroll was able to find a grant to fund the first year of the camp. The camp has continued due to its success. It costs each student \$100 to attend but scholarships are available.

Monday through Wednesday, teams built their vehicles and researched marine technology. On Thursday, all of their hard work came together when they took their vehicles to the Sleep Inn pool and competed in various events.

Each event had a time limit. Teams operated the vehicles from outside the pool and directed them to perform certain tasks. One task was to go through large hoops underwater. Another task was to remove rings from a stand and place in a basket. The scoring varied. Students were able to experience what it felt like to have their hard work pay off.

Read more: <http://www.lakenewsonline.com/article/20140801/News/140739709#ixzz39Wzt1sVV>